



ENHANCING TEACHERS' LINGUISTIC AND PEDAGOGICAL COMPETENCIES THROUGH CAPACITY- BUILDING INITIATIVES IN BAYELSA STATE, NIGERIA

Memunat Olayemi Mahmud¹

Kolawole Francis Ogunbodede²

Thompson Olusegun Ewata³

Abstract

This study examines the enhancement of teachers' linguistic and pedagogical competencies through capacity-building initiatives in Bayelsa State, Nigeria. The research focuses on teachers' English language proficiency, communicative competence, metalinguistic awareness, and pedagogical language knowledge—competencies essential for effective instruction where indigenous languages dominate daily communication. Using census sampling, questionnaires were distributed to 300 newly recruited teachers, with 260 responding (86.7% response rate). Data analysis via SPSS version 29 employed frequency counts, percentages, and descriptive statistics. Findings reveal that training effectively improves teachers' linguistic and pedagogical competencies, demonstrating positive impacts on instructional practices, lesson delivery, student engagement, and classroom management. However, challenges exist in developing advanced academic language skills, implementing sophisticated questioning strategies, and creating English-rich learning environments. The primary obstacles were accelerated training pace and indigenous language dominance in daily communication. The study recommends extending training duration with dedicated

¹ Associate Prof., Dr. Memunat Olayemi Mahmud, Department of English Studies, Adekunle Ajasin University, Akungba-Akoko, Nigeria. yemimahmud@gmail.com. ORCID: 0000-0002-4324-5847

² Dr. Kolawole Francis Ogunbodede, Library, Federal Polytechnic Orogun, Delta State, Nigeria. kolawole.ogunbodede@fepo.edu.ng. ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5518-7787>

³ Prof., Thompson Olusegun Ewata, Department of Linguistics, Foreign and Nigerian Languages, University of Africa, Toru-Orua, Bayelsa State. toewata@gmail.com. ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6251-0979>

modules on language awareness, academic discourse, and strategies for maximising English use in indigenous language-dominant contexts.

Keywords: Teachers' linguistic competencies, Pedagogical competencies, Capacity building, English language proficiency, Communicative competence.

Introduction

Teachers fundamentally shape students' intellectual and personal development, nurturing curiosity, promoting critical thinking, and inspiring lifelong learning (Alali & Wardat, 2024; Scott-Barrett et al., 2023). The quality of teaching professionals represents one of the most critical determinants of student learning outcomes (Chaudhary & Singh, 2022). Teacher quality encompasses subject knowledge, pedagogical expertise, and critically, linguistic proficiency and communicative competence. Linguistic proficiency refers to teachers' mastery of English language systems—phonology, morphology, syntax, and semantics—while communicative competence encompasses their ability to use language appropriately across classroom contexts (Hymes, 1972). Teachers with strong linguistic foundations articulate concepts clearly, employ appropriate academic register, and demonstrate metalinguistic awareness—the ability to reflect consciously on language, enabling them to explain grammatical structures and guide students' language development (Andrews, 2001). Furthermore, pedagogical language knowledge integrates linguistic understanding with instructional expertise, allowing teachers to transform subject content into accessible classroom discourse (Shulman, 1987; Freeman & Johnson, 1998).

In Bayelsa State, linguistic challenges compound these competency requirements. While English serves as the official medium of instruction, both teachers and students predominantly use indigenous languages, primarily Ijaw varieties, in daily communication. This creates a situation where English functions largely as a classroom language, resulting in limited exposure, reduced practice opportunities, and consequently lower English proficiency. The Bayelsa educational environment requires teachers to serve as primary facilitators of English language development, creating English-rich learning environments that compensate for students' limited exposure outside formal settings. This context makes teachers' English language competencies and their ability to maximise classroom English use particularly critical for educational success.

High-quality teachers create engaging, inclusive, student-centred learning environments (Laghari et al., 2023). Linguistic proficiency extends beyond basic fluency to include command of academic vocabulary, understanding of discourse structures, mastery of explanatory language, and ability to employ appropriate questioning strategies. In contexts where students have limited English exposure, teachers must provide comprehensible input, scaffold language production systematically, and create authentic communicative contexts within classroom settings (Singh & Singh, 2021). However, deficiencies in teachers' linguistic and pedagogical competencies hinder student achievement. Inadequate English language proficiency manifests in pronunciation errors, grammatical inaccuracies, limited vocabulary range, and inappropriate register usage—all impeding clear content communication (Sari & Yüce, 2020; Duță, 2015). Weak classroom discourse skills reduce instructional quality and student engagement. When compounded by indigenous language dominance, these deficiencies become particularly detrimental, as teachers lack both English proficiency to model effective language use and pedagogical strategies to create English-rich learning environments. Resolving this issue involves purposeful funding of programs that will help teachers develop both their language competence and pedagogical abilities (Ewata & Okuro, 2024).

The Bayelsa State government established the Teachers Training Registration and Certification Board (TTRCB) in partnership with the Bayelsa State Education Development Trust Fund (BEDTF) to improve teacher quality. Since 2022, the University of Africa Toru-Orua has hosted a six-week, in-person residential training program designed to improve deficiencies in public school education, focusing on contemporary teaching methods, classroom communication skills, lesson planning, and student engagement strategies. The program is conducted entirely on-campus, providing participants with an immersive instructional environment over the six-week period. However, the program's effectiveness from an English language study perspective—particularly its impact on teachers' English proficiency, metalinguistic awareness, classroom discourse competencies, and capacity to create English-rich environments in indigenous language-dominant contexts—remains unexplored. This study examines how the Bayelsa State capacity-building program has improved teachers' linguistic

and instructional competencies and the obstacles teachers experience during training.

Statement of the Problem

Teachers' linguistic competencies and pedagogical expertise constitute fundamental determinants of educational quality in Nigeria. Linguistic competencies encompass language proficiency—mastery of English phonology, grammar, vocabulary, and discourse; communicative competence—ability to use language appropriately across educational contexts; metalinguistic awareness—explicit knowledge enabling conscious reflection and analysis; and pedagogical language knowledge—specialised understanding of transforming content into accessible classroom discourse (Canale & Swain, 1980; Bachman, 1990; Freeman & Johnson, 1998). Student underachievement correlates significantly with teachers' inadequate linguistic preparation and limited professional development access. Many educators demonstrate insufficient English proficiency, manifesting in pronunciation difficulties, grammatical errors, restricted vocabulary, and inappropriate register usage, directly impeding effective lesson delivery and student interaction.

In Bayelsa State, these challenges are compounded by indigenous languages dominating daily communication. English remains largely confined to formal educational settings, limiting authentic language use opportunities. Teachers require strong English proficiency and specialised pedagogical strategies for maximising English exposure within classroom contexts where students have limited outside practice. Specific challenges include inadequate academic vocabulary command, limited understanding of discourse structures, insufficient questioning strategy knowledge, weak metalinguistic awareness, limited capacity for linguistically responsive feedback, and lack of strategies for creating English-rich environments compensating for limited exposure. Additionally, many teachers lack explicit English grammar knowledge, making it difficult to explain language structures or address errors effectively, particularly those arising from first language interference patterns.

Despite program implementation since 2022, critical gaps exist in understanding its effectiveness. Evidence-based research examining how training enhances teachers' English proficiency, metalinguistic awareness, classroom discourse competencies, and ability to employ linguistically-

informed instructional practices remains absent. This study addresses these gaps by examining the program's effectiveness in enhancing linguistic and pedagogical competencies, with attention to language-related teaching quality dimensions and linguistic obstacles in indigenous language-dominant contexts

Objectives of the Study

The specific objectives are:

1. to assess the effectiveness of the training program in enhancing teachers' linguistic competencies, including English language proficiency, metalinguistic awareness, and classroom discourse skills, as well as pedagogical competencies;
2. to ascertain the impact of the training program on teachers' linguistically-informed instructional practices, classroom language management, and student engagement through effective communication; and
3. to identify the linguistic and pedagogical challenges faced by participants in the training program, particularly those related to English language acquisition and application in classroom contexts where indigenous languages dominate daily communication.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

1. How effective is the teachers training program in enhancing teachers' linguistic competencies, including English language proficiency, metalinguistic awareness, and classroom discourse skills, as well as pedagogical competencies?
2. What is the impact of the training program on teachers' linguistically-informed instructional practices, classroom language management, and student engagement through effective communication?
3. What are the linguistic and pedagogical challenges faced by participants in the training program, particularly those related to English language acquisition and application in classroom contexts where indigenous languages dominate?

Literature Review

Teachers' linguistic competencies encompass multidimensional knowledge extending beyond basic proficiency. Language proficiency refers to mastery of English language systems—phonology, morphology, syntax, semantics, and pragmatics (Bachman, 1990). However, proficiency alone proves insufficient. Teachers require metalinguistic awareness—explicit, conscious knowledge enabling systematic analysis and explanation of linguistic structures (Andrews, 2001; Roehr, 2008). Communicative competence, theorised by Hymes (1972) and elaborated by Canale and Swain (1980), integrates grammatical knowledge with sociolinguistic, discourse, and strategic competencies. Teachers must understand when, where, how, and with whom particular language forms prove appropriate, including selecting appropriate registers, adjusting formality levels, and employing academic vocabulary (Schleppegrell, 2004). Freeman and Johnson (1998) introduced pedagogical language knowledge, extending Shulman's (1987) pedagogical content knowledge to language teaching contexts. This specialised knowledge enables teachers to transform subject content into accessible classroom discourse through sequencing language input developmentally, providing comprehensible explanations, employing effective questioning techniques, and offering formative feedback (Bailey, 2006).

Indigenous language-dominant contexts present unique challenges. When students' daily communication occurs primarily in indigenous languages, English functions as what Cummins (1979) terms "context-reduced" language—lacking rich contextual support facilitating natural acquisition. Classroom instruction becomes the primary, sometimes sole, source of comprehensible English input. Krashen's (1982) Input Hypothesis suggests acquisition occurs when learners receive comprehensible input slightly beyond current proficiency—particularly crucial where English exposure is limited to formal settings. Teachers must possess strong English proficiency and sophisticated strategies for providing comprehensible input, scaffolding language production, and creating authentic communicative contexts. Research emphasises teachers' awareness of first language influence on second language acquisition. Contrastive analysis (Lado, 1957; James, 1980) suggests differences between learners' first and target languages predict difficulty areas. Teachers benefit from understanding how Ijaw phonological, morphological, and syntactic patterns differ from

English, enabling them to anticipate specific interference patterns (Odlin, 1989). Creating English-rich environments requires deliberate strategies. Ellis (1994) emphasises meaningful target language interaction facilitates acquisition, requiring teachers to maximise authentic English communication opportunities. Swain's (1985) Output Hypothesis argues language production—not merely comprehension—drives acquisition. Teachers must balance providing comprehensible input with creating meaningful English output opportunities.

Well-designed professional development significantly enhances teachers' capabilities. Itedjere (2025) found successful initiatives enhanced innovative teaching strategies, effective classroom management, and student-centred practices, emphasising context-specific, site-based designs prove most effective. Richards and Farrell (2005) argue language teacher education should develop linguistic proficiency, pedagogical reasoning abilities, and contextual knowledge concurrently, highlighting teachers require high-level English proficiency and explicit metalinguistic knowledge enabling language analysis, grammatical structure explanation, and informed feedback. Training programs featuring systematic linguistic content, explicit metalinguistic instruction, classroom discourse analysis opportunities, and strategies adapted to indigenous language-dominant contexts prove most effective (Andrews, 2001; Borg, 2006).

Professional development demonstrably impacts instructional practices. Mukagihana et al. (2024) found training substantially improved teachers' techno-pedagogical competencies. Uzorka et al. (2024) found training succeeded in producing superior educational content, implementing improved teaching methods, and advancing learner participation, consequently improving achievement. Cordova (2009) found students rated trained teachers significantly higher in engagement. Effective engagement depends on classroom discourse skills—abilities to initiate discussions, employ effective questioning sequences, provide appropriate wait time, and offer responsive feedback extending student thinking (Walsh, 2006; Boyd & Markarian, 2011).

Despite their importance, teacher training programs encounter obstacles reducing effectiveness. Training duration represents a major constraint. Teachers require extended timeframes to comprehend and implement novel approaches. UNESCO (2015) identifies abbreviated training as

problematic because insufficient duration prevents quality delivery. Linguistic competency development requires particularly extended engagement. Language proficiency develops gradually through sustained input, practice, and feedback rather than brief intensive exposure (Ellis, 2008). Metalinguistic awareness requires time for conscious reflection on language structures, discourse pattern analysis, and explicit linguistic knowledge development (Andrews, 2001). Resource limitations constrain program scope and quality. For linguistic development, resources required include language laboratories, audio-visual materials, corpus-based materials, specialised references on grammar and discourse analysis, and materials addressing contrastive analysis between indigenous languages and English (Fadila & Saputri, 2024). Inadequate program design represents another barrier. For linguistic development, facilitator qualifications prove critical. Effective language teacher educators require high-level English proficiency, metalinguistic knowledge, and ability to demonstrate strategies for creating English-rich environments in indigenous language-dominant contexts (Freeman & Johnson, 1998). The disconnect between competencies developed during training and practical classroom skills required represents a critical gap (Stevenson et al., 2020), especially problematic in indigenous language-dominant contexts where teachers need specialised strategies for maximising English use when students have limited outside exposure.

Theoretical Framework

This study adopts Malcolm Knowles' Andragogy Theory (MKAT) as the theoretical framework explaining how teachers as adult learners develop skills and knowledge. According to MKAT, adults prefer learning methods combining experiential knowledge with self-directed training addressing relevant professional problems. Adult language learning differs fundamentally from child first language acquisition. Adults bring substantial prior linguistic knowledge—established language habits, explicit grammatical understanding, and metalinguistic awareness capacities—influencing new language learning (Ellis, 2008). MKAT's emphasis on self-directed learning aligns with adult language learners' capacities to consciously analyse language patterns, monitor language production, and employ metacognitive strategies for linguistic improvement (Wenden, 1998).

Adult learners select specific goals, preferring content directly supporting individual needs. Teachers require outstanding communicative competence and powerful educational approaches, particularly where they must create English-rich learning environments despite indigenous language dominance. Training must offer experiential activities enabling teachers to develop language skills through practice and receive meaningful feedback. For linguistic competency development, this necessitates task-based language learning activities where teachers practice classroom discourse—explaining concepts, asking questions, providing feedback—in authentic communicative contexts (Long, 2015). Through active, practice-based learning, teachers develop comprehensive abilities in communicating and presenting content confidently.

Knowles emphasises adult learners succeed when training focuses on authentic problems with immediate practical applications. For language-related pedagogical competencies in indigenous language-dominant contexts, this means addressing teachers' actual classroom linguistic challenges—simplifying academic language for comprehensibility, employing appropriate questioning strategies, providing linguistically responsive feedback, and creating English-rich learning environments when students have limited outside exposure. MKAT emphasises adult learners require flexible learning conditions with appropriate pacing. Language proficiency, metalinguistic awareness, and discourse skills develop gradually through sustained practice rather than rapid information transmission (Ellis, 2008). Spaced practice proves more effective than massed practice—distributing learning over multiple sessions with intervals enhances retention compared to concentrated exposure (Cepeda et al., 2006). Adopting MKAT principles in Bayelsa State teacher training programs, with attention to linguistic competency development requirements in contexts where English functions primarily as a classroom language, will produce more effective and sustainable educator development systems.

Methodology

This study employed quantitative research methodology using descriptive survey design. The population comprised 300 newly employed teachers in Bayelsa State, Nigeria. Census sampling was utilised, with questionnaires distributed to all 300 teachers; 260 completed the instrument (86.7%

response rate). The questionnaire incorporated items addressing linguistic competencies: English proficiency dimensions (grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation clarity); metalinguistic awareness (ability to explain language structures); classroom discourse skills (questioning techniques, explanation clarity, feedback provision); pedagogical language knowledge (ability to transform content into accessible classroom language); and strategies for maximising English use where indigenous languages dominate communication. These items captured the multidimensional nature of teachers' linguistic competencies theorised in applied linguistics and language teacher education, with attention to teaching demands in indigenous language-dominant contexts.

Research procedures maintained ethical standards. Researchers obtained informed consent; all participants completed questionnaires voluntarily. Face and content validity testing ensured instrument appropriateness. Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.88 confirmed instrument reliability. Data analysis employed frequency counts, percentages, and SPSS version 29 generated descriptive statistics. Questionnaire responses utilised 4-point Likert-type scales. A criterion score of 2.5 was adopted, calculated as the mathematical midpoint between lowest and highest values. For Research Question 1, mean scores below 2.5 were considered not effective, scores between 2.5–3.4 moderately effective, scores between 3.5–4.4 effective. For Research Question 2, mean scores ≥ 2.5 indicated positive impact, scores < 2.5 indicated negative impact. For Research Question 3, scores < 2.5 were adjudged disagreed, scores ≥ 2.5 agreed.

Findings of the Study

Section A

Table 1. Demographic Information

Gender	Frequency	Percentage %
Male	93	35
Female	169	65
Total	260	100

Table 1 indicates that female teachers constituted the majority (65%) of study participants, while male teachers comprised 35%. This gender distribution reflects broader patterns in primary and secondary education

where teaching professions, particularly in developing contexts, demonstrate female predominance (UNESCO, 2020).

Research Question 1: How effective is the teachers training program in enhancing teachers' linguistic and pedagogical competencies?

Table 2: Effectiveness of the Teachers Training Program in Enhancing Teachers' Linguistic and Pedagogical Competencies

S/N	Item	SA	A	D	S	Mean
1	The training has improved my English language proficiency and ability to communicate clearly and effectively in the classroom	186	71	2	1	3.7
2	I feel more confident in designing and delivering engaging lessons using appropriate academic language	155	98	5	2	3.6
3	I feel more confident in using subject-specific vocabulary and metalinguistic terminology appropriately during lessons	154	94	11	1	3.5
4	The training has enhanced my ability to simplify complex concepts using clear, accessible language while maintaining academic rigor	149	101	7	3	3.5
5	I can apply the knowledge gained from the training to improve my classroom discourse practices (questioning, explaining, feedback provision)	160	85	10	5	3.5
6	I am better equipped to support students' language development through linguistically-informed instructional strategies	137	107	14	2	3.5
7	The training program has improved my metalinguistic awareness and understanding of how language works in educational contexts	96	161	3	0	3.4
8	The training has provided me with practical strategies to assess and enhance student language learning alongside subject content	140	100	15	5	3.4
Grand Mean						3.5

Table 2 demonstrates the program effectively enhances competencies. Specifically, the program improves: English proficiency and classroom communication skills (M=3.7); confidence in lesson design using

appropriate academic language (M=3.6); subject-specific vocabulary and metalinguistic terminology usage (M=3.5); abilities to simplify complex concepts through clear language (M=3.5); classroom discourse practices including questioning, explaining, and feedback provision (M=3.5); capacity to support student language development through linguistically-informed strategies (M=3.5); metalinguistic awareness and understanding of language in educational contexts (M=3.4); and strategies for assessing and enhancing student language learning alongside content (M=3.4). The grand mean of 3.5 exceeds the criterion mean of 2.5, confirming program effectiveness. These findings indicate training successfully addresses multiple dimensions of teacher linguistic competence including language proficiency, communicative competence, metalinguistic awareness, and pedagogical language knowledge.

Research Question 2: What is the impact of the training program on teachers' linguistically-informed instructional practices, classroom language management, and student engagement through effective communication?

Table 3: Impact of the Training Program on Teachers' Instructional Practices, Classroom Language Management, and Student Engagement

S/N	Impact of the Training Program	SA	A	D	SD	Mean
1.	The training has provided me with strong theoretical understanding of linguistically-informed teaching strategies	174	77	9	0	3.6
2.	I feel confident in designing and delivering engaging lesson plans that align with students' linguistic and academic needs	159	82	143		3.5
3.	The training has helped me develop strategies to actively engage students through effective classroom discourse and communication	144	105	101		3.5
4.	I feel more confident in using interactive and student-centred teaching methods that leverage language as a learning tool	154	94	111		3.5
5.	The training has equipped me with effective classroom language management strategies to maintain productive learning environments	158	71	214		3.4

S/N	Impact of the Training Program	SA	A	D	SD	Mean
6.	The training has encouraged me to explore innovative ways to motivate and inspire students through compelling language use	98	1593	0		3.4
7.	The training has improved my ability to create linguistically inclusive and supportive classroom atmospheres	15470	190			3.3
8.	The training sessions have enhanced my ability to assess student language development and content learning simultaneously	68	1865	1		3.2
9.	The training has equipped me with effective strategies to provide linguistically responsive feedback that advances both content and language learning	1051153010				3.2
10.	The training has equipped me with effective strategies to maximise English use in contexts where students primarily speak indigenous languages	45	1107530			2.8
	Grand Mean					3.34

Table 3 demonstrates generally positive impacts. Specific positive impacts include: theoretical understanding of linguistically-informed teaching strategies (M=3.6); confidence in designing lessons aligned with students' linguistic and academic needs (M=3.5); strategies for student engagement through effective classroom discourse (M=3.5); confidence using interactive methods leveraging language as learning tool (M=3.5); classroom language management strategies (M=3.4); innovative approaches to student motivation through language (M=3.4); creation of linguistically inclusive classroom atmospheres (M=3.3); simultaneous assessment of language development and content learning (M=3.2); and provision of linguistically responsive feedback (M=3.2). However, a notable challenge emerges regarding strategies to maximise English use where students primarily speak indigenous languages (M=2.8), indicating moderate effectiveness but revealing an area requiring enhanced focus. The grand mean of 3.34 exceeds the criterion mean of 2.5, confirming overall positive impact. Training successfully enhances teachers' abilities to employ language as an instructional resource, though continued development in advanced areas like linguistically responsive feedback provision and strategies for creating

English-rich environments in indigenous language-dominant contexts remains beneficial.

Research Question 3: What are the linguistic and pedagogical challenges faced by participants in the training program?

Table 4. Challenges Faced by Teachers in the Training Program

S/N	Challenges	SAA	D	SD	Mean	
1.	The dominance of indigenous Bayelsa languages in daily communication makes it difficult to implement English language strategies learned during training	98	10542	15	3.0	
2.	The pace of the training sessions is too fast to adequately grasp linguistic concepts and develop language proficiency	91	93	47	29	2.9
3.	I find the duration of the training sessions too long and fatiguing to be effective for language learning	40	74	79	67	2.3
4.	The training materials provided are inadequate for developing metalinguistic awareness language skills	33	52	10570	2.2	
5.	I lacked access to necessary linguistic resources (dictionaries, grammar references, language corpora) to implement what I learned	31	54	10768	2.2	
6.	The logistics and organisation of the training program are poorly managed	30	30	11288	2.0	
7.	The training methods used were not engaging or effective for adult language learners	20	31	1081011.9		
8.	The training content does not align with the actual linguistic realities and challenges I face in my classroom	18	28	1101041.8		
	Grand Mean				2.3	

Table 4 reveals accelerated training pace represents a significant challenge (M=2.9), with participants finding pace too fast to adequately grasp linguistic concepts and develop language proficiency. Additionally, indigenous Bayelsa language dominance creates implementation challenges (M=3.0), suggesting difficulty applying English language strategies when both teachers and students predominantly use indigenous languages daily. Other items demonstrate mean scores below criterion 2.5,

indicating participants did not perceive major issues with: session duration and fatigue ($M=2.3$); materials adequacy for metalinguistic development ($M=2.2$); linguistic resource access ($M=2.2$); logistics and organisation ($M=2.0$); teaching method appropriateness for adult language learners ($M=1.9$); or content alignment with classroom linguistic realities ($M=1.8$). The grand mean of 2.3 falls below criterion 2.5, though elevated scores for training pace and indigenous language dominance challenges indicate these two factors constitute primary obstacles.

Discussion

Research Question 1 findings reveal training effectively improves teachers' linguistic and pedagogical competencies. Teachers demonstrated enhanced English proficiency, communicative competence in classroom contexts, metalinguistic awareness, and pedagogical language knowledge. These improvements manifest in clearer communication abilities, more effective lesson delivery employing appropriate academic language, stronger instructional discourse strategy grasp, and better understanding of how language functions in educational contexts. Improved language proficiency (Bachman, 1990) enables teachers to employ English grammatically, pronounce clearly, and use vocabulary appropriately. Enhanced communicative competence (Hymes, 1972; Canale & Swain, 1980) allows teachers to adjust language to diverse classroom situations, select appropriate registers, and structure coherent explanations. Developed metalinguistic awareness (Andrews, 2001; Roehr, 2008) enables teachers to analyse language explicitly, explain grammatical structures systematically, and provide informed feedback. Improved pedagogical language knowledge (Freeman & Johnson, 1998) allows teachers to transform subject content into accessible classroom discourse. These findings align with MKAT principles and accord with Itedjere (2025), who found successful training enhanced innovative teaching strategies, effective classroom management, and student-centered practices.

Research Question 2 revealed training generates generally positive impacts on linguistically-informed instructional practices, lesson delivery, student engagement through communication, and classroom language management. Teachers acquire contemporary teaching methodologies fostering active learning through improved classroom discourse. However, an important consideration concerns implementing English language

strategies when both teachers and students predominantly use indigenous languages. The sociolinguistic reality where English functions primarily as a classroom language creates unique pedagogical demands. Teachers must possess strong English proficiency and develop strategies for creating English-rich learning environments compensating for students' limited outside exposure, including maximising comprehensible English input, scaffolding English language production, and creating authentic communicative contexts. The moderate effectiveness rating for this dimension ($M=2.8$) suggests while training provides foundation, teachers benefit from more extensive preparation in strategies designed for contexts where students have limited English exposure, aligning with Ellis (1994) and Swain (1985) emphasising importance of both comprehensible input and meaningful output opportunities. The grand mean of 3.34 exceeds the criterion mean of 2.5, confirming overall positive impact despite the identified challenge area. The results align with Uzorka et al. (2024), Mukagihana et al. (2024), and Korb et al. (2016), who found training enhanced teaching methods, advanced learner participation, improved engagement, and strengthened classroom management.

Research Question 3 findings demonstrate accelerated training pace and indigenous language dominance represent primary obstacles. Regarding training pace, linguistic competency development fundamentally requires extended processing time and sustained practice. Language proficiency, metalinguistic awareness, and discourse skills develop gradually through repeated exposure, conscious reflection, and deliberate practice rather than rapid information transmission (Ellis, 2008). Accelerated pace prevents teachers from processing new linguistic concepts deeply, as understanding grammatical structures, discourse patterns, and pragmatic principles requires time for mental representation building (Anderson, 1995). It limits pronunciation pattern practice sufficiently, as developing new articulatory habits demands repeated practice with corrective feedback (Flege, 1995). Rapid delivery prevents systematic academic vocabulary expansion, requiring multiple exposures in varied contexts for deep lexical knowledge development (Nation, 2001), and inhibits metalinguistic awareness development through reflection, as conscious language analysis abilities emerge through deliberate attention to linguistic patterns over time (Roehr, 2008). Insufficient time prevents adequate classroom discourse pattern analysis, requiring observation, transcription analysis, and reflective

discussion (Walsh, 2006), and limits experimentation with sophisticated questioning and feedback strategies requiring practice and refinement.

To mitigate the challenge of accelerated training pace, future program designs should adopt a distributed, modular delivery structure rather than a condensed intensive format. Specifically, the six-week program could be redesigned as a series of shorter, recurring sessions spread over several months, applying the spacing effect principle (Cepeda et al., 2006) whereby intervals between learning episodes significantly improve retention and transfer. Between sessions, participants could engage in structured self-study, guided classroom practice tasks, and peer observation assignments, thereby reinforcing linguistic concepts through authentic application rather than passive reception. Incorporating reflective journaling and peer learning circles would further allow teachers to process metalinguistic concepts at their own pace while building collaborative professional learning communities. Where calendar constraints prevent extending the overall program duration, within-session pacing adjustments—such as shorter input segments alternating with longer practice activities, increased use of task-based role-plays, and reduced content load per session—can meaningfully alleviate cognitive overload. Programme facilitators should also conduct ongoing pacing assessments through brief formative checks, enabling real-time adjustments to delivery speed based on participants' demonstrated comprehension and skill development.

Regarding indigenous language challenge, the linguistic ecology of Bayelsa State presents an additional dimension to pacing challenges and pedagogical demands. The dominance of indigenous Bayelsa languages in daily communication ($M=3.0$) creates substantial implementation challenges, as both teachers and students predominantly use indigenous languages outside formal instructional settings. Teachers need extended time to develop English proficiency and learn pedagogical strategies designed for contexts where students have limited English exposure, including techniques for building vocabulary systematically in low-exposure contexts, providing comprehensible input when students lack extensive English background, scaffolding language production when learners have limited practice, creating motivating contexts for English use when indigenous languages dominate, addressing first language interference patterns systematically, and establishing English-rich

classroom environments compensating for limited outside exposure. Adult language learning research demonstrates spaced practice distributed over extended periods proves significantly more effective than massed practice concentrated in brief intervals (Cepeda et al., 2006; Kornell & Bjork, 2008). These findings support MKAT principles emphasising adult learners need flexible learning conditions with appropriate pacing and conform with UNESCO (2015), which stated short training duration stands as a major problem for in-service teachers.

Conclusion

The study concluded that training effectively improves teachers' linguistic and pedagogical skills, specifically enhancing English proficiency, metalinguistic awareness, classroom discourse competencies, and pedagogical language knowledge. Training demonstrates generally positive impacts on instructional practices, lesson delivery, student engagement through communication, and classroom management. However, two primary obstacles prevent optimal linguistic competency development: accelerated training pace preventing adequate time for sustained practice and reflection, and indigenous Bayelsa language dominance in daily communication creating unique pedagogical demands for teachers attempting to create English-rich learning environments when students have limited outside English exposure.

Recommendations

The training duration should be extended, implementing distributed practice principles that leverage spacing effects. Training should be structured across multiple sessions distributed over extended periods with regular intervals allowing consolidation. This restructuring should include dedicated modules on English proficiency (pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, discourse), metalinguistic awareness development, classroom discourse analysis, and academic language and register awareness, with adequate time between sessions for linguistic concept processing, practice, and spaced repetition of key concepts.

Provide explicit instruction on transforming subject content into accessible classroom language, addressing explanation structures and coherence, effective questioning strategies, linguistically responsive feedback techniques, and strategies for simplifying academic language while maintaining rigor. This should be developed through practice with real

classroom scenarios, role-playing, authentic teaching episode analysis, and video analysis of effective classroom discourse to strengthen teachers' abilities in initiating and sustaining productive classroom discussions, managing turn-taking and participation, employing effective wait time, and scaffolding student language production.

Include explicit instruction on English grammar and language structures, providing frameworks for analysing student language errors and difficulties, classroom discourse patterns, and language functions in different subject areas. This should incorporate metalanguage terminology instruction enabling teachers to discuss language explicitly with students, and integrate language assessment techniques developing teachers' abilities to assess student language development alongside content learning, identify language-related learning barriers, provide diagnostic feedback on language use, and monitor language proficiency development over time.

Given the critical importance of the Bayelsa context, the organiser should create a special session to address how limited English exposure can affect language acquisition, first language interference patterns in English learning, and strategies for maximising English input where indigenous languages dominate. Training should provide instruction on creating English-rich classroom environments, scaffolding techniques for learners with low English proficiency, vocabulary building in limited-exposure contexts, motivating English use when indigenous languages dominate, contrastive analysis between Ijaw languages and English, common transfer errors and remediation strategies, and building English language communities within schools.

Equip training venues with specialised linguistic resources including language laboratories, audio-visual materials, grammar and discourse analysis references, corpus-based materials, and sample classroom interaction transcripts for analysis. Ensure qualified language educator facilitators with high-level English proficiency, metalinguistic knowledge and explicit grammar understanding, experience in language teacher education, expertise in classroom discourse analysis, and ability to model effective pedagogical language use.

Create follow-up mentorship programs focusing on classroom language use observation and feedback, discourse pattern analysis, and question and feedback strategy refinement. Develop peer collaboration networks for sharing effective language strategies and supporting sustained linguistic development. Integrate continuous feedback mechanisms establishing systems for monitoring linguistic competency development trajectories, gathering participant feedback on pacing and content, assessing transfer of linguistic knowledge to classroom practice, and refining program design based on evidence.

These recommendations, grounded in English language study on linguistic competency development, adult language learning principles, and specific demands of teaching English in indigenous language-dominant contexts, aim to optimise the Bayelsa State teacher training program's effectiveness in developing linguistic and pedagogical competencies essential for high-quality instruction where English functions primarily as a classroom language.

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